

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH GUY SURIAN, U.S. ARMY CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION COMMAND; CAROLYN COLLINS, ARMY SEXUAL HARASSMENT/ASSAULT PREVENTION & RESPONSE; LT. COL. MIKE MOOSE, PUBLIC AFFAIRS FOR ARMY G-1, PERSONNEL; CHRIS GREY, U.S. ARMY CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS; CHARLIE COSGROVE, ARMY OFFICE OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL, CRIMINAL LAW DIVISION; DAVID LISAK, FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST, ARMY CONSULTANT; JENNIFER ELZI (SP), OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, PUBLIC AFFAIRS; LINDY KYZER, ARMY PUBLIC AFFAIRS TIME: 1:45 P.M. EDT DATE: FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2009

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HANK MINITREZ (Army Public Affairs officer for the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response Prevention Program): All right. Good afternoon, everyone. This is Hank Minitrez, also from Army Public Affairs, from -- the public affairs officer for the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response/Prevention Program. If we could go around the phone lines and introduce ourselves to one another, that would be very helpful. So who do we have on the line? LT. COL. MOOSE: This is Lieutenant Colonel Mike Moose, Public Affairs for Army G-1 -- personnel -- and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

MR. MINITREZ: Thanks, Mike. And thank you for joining us.

MR. GREY: This is Chris Grey. I'm the director of Public Affairs for Army Criminal Investigations.

MR. MINITREZ: Chris, good afternoon.

MR. COSGROVE: Good afternoon, everybody. This is Charlie Cosgrove. I'm with the Army Office of the Judge Advocate General, Criminal Law Division.

MR. MINITREZ: Thank you very much for joining us today, Charlie.

MR. LISAK: And this is David Lisak -- Dr. David Lisak. I'm a forensic psychologist in -- consulting with the Army, working with the Army and the Air Force part of that, and I'm a researcher.

MR. MINITREZ: Thank you, Dr. Lisak, for joining us -- the nation's number-one expert on this topic.

MR. : For offenders.

MR. MINITREZ: For offenders.

MS. ELZI (SP): This is Jennifer Elzi (sp) from OSD Public Affairs. I do media outreach on the topic of sexual assault.

MR. MINITREZ: Hey, Jennifer. Nice to meet you.

MS. ELZI (SP): You too.

Q Terri (Zindroni ?) with A Soldier's Mind.

MR. MINITREZ: Thank you for joining us, Terri. Now we're getting into who the bloggers are. That's great.

Q CJ Grisham. I'm the public affairs rep for A Soldier's Perspective.

MR. MINITREZ: CJ! Thanks for joining us. It's good to meet you finally.

Q You too, sir.

MR. MINITREZ: All right. In the room we have with us Ms. Lindy Kyzer from Office of the Chief of Public Affairs. I'm Hank Minitrez -- already introduced myself. Also joining us, Ms. Carolyn Collins, who is the chief of the Army's Sexual Harassment Assault Response/Prevention program, and also, Mr. Guy Surian, criminal investigation command.

So bloggers, let's open it up.

Of course as you know, we have been conducting a weeklong summit here in Crystal City, right outside Washington, D.C., as the Army moves forward with phase two of our prevention strategy, for the sexual harassment/assault prevention program, which we're trying to basically get soldier buy-in and commitment across the force.

As many of you know from the press release, last September, we hosted the first summit, which was to get the senior leaders' commitment. We had commanding generals from across the Army, stationed all over the world, come together in D.C. to explain the rollout of the program.

At this summit, we had the senior non-commissioned officers, who are in charge of the middle management of the Army, to explain to them soldier commitment, to this program, and understand that the command philosophy is that we will not tolerate this; we want to eliminate it from the ranks. And they are where the rubber meets the road, managing those sergeants and staffs, sergeants out there who deal with soldiers on a day-to-day basis.

So that's my opening pitch. Go ahead and open it up to questions.

MR. COSGROVE: Sir, this is Charlie Cosgrove of OTJAG Crim Law again. I talked -- I addressed this earlier, but I'm not sure everybody was there. Because my boss, the judge advocate general of the Army, moved up a briefing, I've got to leave promptly at 14:00. So if they have questions concerning our JAG initiatives, perhaps we could start with those.

MR. MINITREZ: Well, Charlie, why don't you give us a rundown of the new things that we've just announced, with JAG, in terms of the new special prosecutors that we're bringing in, and get everybody up to speed on that.

MR. COSGROVE: All right, sir, good idea.

Well, first of all, let me start by saying, we're bringing in seven highly-qualified experts or, as we like to call them, HQEs. And two of them, because we have a system, which requires the judge advocate general to be responsible for the entire system of military justice, two of them will go to our defense counsel program, U.S. Army Trial Defense Service. The other five will come to, for lack of a better word, the prosecution side of the house. One will be here in the Office of the Judge Advocate General.

One will go to our school. And the remaining -- let me see, what is that -- four or three -- I'm sorry, I have my shoes on -- will go to our Trial Counsel Assistance Program. And the idea, at least on the prosecution side of the house, for these folks, will be quite bluntly to improve the prosecution of sexual assault cases across the Army.

That will also incidentally improve the prosecution of all other types of cases across the Army, as well, because almost all these concepts are transferable to other types of litigation.

These are -- and I must say, we haven't hired any of them yet. So I'm not going to give you any names. But we were seeking experts in the field who have a great deal of experience in litigating sexual assault cases.

Those are the folks we're reaching out to. And we expect them to improve our training and to be actually -- although they cannot actually go into court and prosecute the cases -- but to provide a great deal of expertise and assistance to those prosecutors in the field who need it in prosecuting these cases.

And if I failed to mention it, they will also assist in training both the -- all of the prosecutors.

Now, with respect to the special victims prosecutors, as we call them, we have authorizations for 15 additional JAG officers, who are going to go out to the field to assist in prosecuting and dedicated to prosecuting sexual assault cases. This isn't going to happen overnight. We're looking at experienced litigators who will go out and, as I say, not only prosecute these cases but also help train other counsel in their area in prosecuting these cases, along with the assistance of the HQEs.

These folks are -- we're identifying them and they will be self-identified as experienced litigators -- (short audio break). And that assignment cycle is being started this summer. It's not going to happen, as I said, overnight, but we hope to have all 15 in place at some time in the future, which I'm sorry I cannot identify as I sit here.

Let me at that point -- let me stop at this point and ask if there are questions.

Q This is CJ from A Soldier's Perspective. Sir, I've got a few questions. Well, first, do y'all have any statistics about sexual assault in the Army? There seems to be kind of a recent push pushing this thing out, so I'd like to know if you had any statistics about why we're suddenly focused on this.

MR. COSGROVE: Well, I think that question is probably better addressed to Carolyn Collins. I think we're focused on it because, as the Army says, and is accurate, even one sexual assault is too many. And when you see these statistics, you -- please keep in mind that what we report out is from the very slightest wrongful sexual touch to the most egregious rape. Not all the statistics means that every case is a rape allegation.

MS. COLLINS: If I could follow up on that -- this is Carolyn Collins. We've been tracking the crime within the Army and reporting up to not only Defense Department but up to Congress since 2004. And as our program rolled out in 2004 and we put a lot of emphasis on the program, we saw reporting go up, which was exactly what we expected, because we are trying to encourage reporting.

Middle of '05, we put in restricted reporting across all the services, which meant that an individual could do an unrestricted report, get counseling, get medical care, actually have a sexual assault forensic exam done, but not actually report the crime. And we did that because we knew this is the most underreported crime in the nation, and we had already, based on survey data and some reports that had come forward independently had said that there were many reasons folks were not reporting the crime, as there are out there nationally.

And we wanted to not only make sure our soldiers were taken care of and were safe and had their needs met -- this gave us an opportunity to do that by encouraging them to come forward -- but we hoped that they would additionally choose to change from a restricted to an unrestricted report and have those crimes investigated. But the restricted reports clearly gave us an opportunity to see the cases that we would not have been aware of beforehand.

As we move forward and we continue with our reporting, I can tell you last year I briefed out the secretary and the chief of staff of the Army with our 2008 report. And we were -- although we had expected increased reporting initially in that, we saw -- we thought that we had -- we were kind of at a plateau, that we were still having soldiers committing these assaults and still being held accountable and that we needed to readdress our prevention efforts.

Our original prevention efforts had been more focused on risk reduction, how a potential victim -- how you could keep yourself from being a potential victim, which was more along the lines of make sure you walk with a battle buddy, make sure that you're in well-lit areas, watch your drink, all of those kind of things. And we wanted to refocus our prevention efforts more looking at how do we prevent the offender from offending in the first place.

And so that's what we did. We stood up a general officers steering committee last spring with proponents from across the Army staff, to include not only our investigators out of CID but our judge advocate generals' office and many others. And we developed a strategy for prevention, talked to congressional members about that as well as we moved forward. And then we launched that new approved strategy. The SecArmy and the chief and our director of the Army staff approved that strategy in August. We launched it early September with our first summit.

And the first phase of that strategy was "Committed Army Leadership." So at our first summit, you had -- we had over 70 general officers from across the Army down to the division level, as well as program managers come into that summit, learned about best practices; after having been exposed to the best

practices, spent a few days working on the way ahead for implementing phase one so that they could immediately implement it when they left that summit, which they did.

We are now coming up on the end of phase one. It was an eight-month phase. It was to get all the senior leadership not only educated and on board, but because this is a sequential phased-out process with our strategy, we could not really move into phase two till we had started implementing phase one.

And phase two is "Army Wide Conviction." And what that means is every soldier, every member of the Army family's on board with stopping this crime.

Now, after phase one, I will tell you, the secretary challenged us to not only look at sexual assault but look at sexual harassment, and considering that as a precursor to sexual assault. So we have done some initiatives in that area. We have taken -- at the headquarters level of the Army moved sexual harassment out of the equal employment office for military members and equal employment office for civilian members and taken those pieces and moved it into the -- what was previously the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office to create the new SHARP Office, which is Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention.

And so we launched this summit with the launch of the second phase. We had a lot of our leaders come in and speak on what they had accomplished in the first phase. But now we're working on "Army Wide Conviction" and, as Hank said earlier, that means every soldier on board, every member.

The closest influence to those soldiers are their NCO or non-commissioned officers. And so, again, this time we had command sergeant majors, again, down to the division level, come in and join us, as well as -- the secretary launched our summit. The sergeant major of the Army also spoke to all the command sergeant majors, as well as chief of staff of the Army.

We just finished reporting out about 15 minutes ago to General Rochelle on not only what they learned but their recommendations for each one of the areas under phase two where across the Army they think they can make improvements. In addition to the command sergeant majors, again, we had sexual assault program managers from across the Army, our sexual assault response coordinators, representatives out of the equal opportunity office across the Army, as well as the equal employment office and representatives across the Army staff.

So we are really looking at a holistic look as we move into phase two with this issue.

In addition to that, in both summits we've had all the services here, as well as DOD, and we had invited congressional members and staffers to join us.

And so we are wanting to partner across the nation. We did expand this time to also include other government agencies, like the Center for Disease Control and Department of Justice and others. So we are really looking at this as a holistic effort of how we can partner with our nation to really get after this crime.

MR. COSGROVE: Sir and ma'am, if I may jump back in, I'd like to add a couple of comments to the comments I've already made. Three of our HQEs, as I

noted earlier, although somewhat inelegantly, are going to our -- and I think I used the acronym TCAP -- that's our Trial Counsel Assistance Program -- which has been in existence for several years now, which is being beefed up both in terms of active-duty military and by the addition of these HQEs. And these folks, as I noted earlier, are responsible for improving and assisting in the prosecution process across the Army. And the HQEs will focus on sexual assault, will improve that program with the prosecution of sexual assault cases, and improve the training program.

In addition to that, we've already -- we're looking at and have already started sending our existing prosecutors to training -- civilian training programs with the Department of Justice, and we're looking at sending them to programs -- training programs with the American Prosecution Research Institute, which is a subdivision of the National District Attorneys Association.

And with that I will turn it back over to questions or comments.

MS. COLLINS: I did want to add that this is a four-phased actual strategy piece, and I didn't mention the other two. Of course as they build on each other, we are building toward cultural change, to achieve cultural change, which is phase three and phase four, would be sustainment, refinement and sharing best practices with -- not only with the other services but with all our national partners.

MR. MINITREZ: Before we go on, we've had a couple other people log in. So the two new folks, if you could identify yourselves, that would be great.  
MR. GREY: Yeah, it's Chris Grey of CID. I just got disconnected.

MR. MINITREZ: Oh. (Laughter.) Hello again, Chris.

MR. GREY: Thanks.

MR. MINITREZ: And who else?

MS. : (Inaudible.)

MR. MINITREZ: Okay. All right. Let's continue on. CJ, did we get the answer to your question?

Q Yes, sir. I guess -- yeah, you did. And I guess, as a follow-up, is there -- I think you kind of answered this -- that the push for -- has increased reporting, but is there a -- in -- taking that into account, is the Army experiencing an upward trend of these sorts of instances of crimes?

MS. COLLINS: I would not say that we're experiencing an upward trend. We really don't know what our -- we can guesstimate our actual numbers. What we do know is what is being reported. But of course, again, as we've mentioned before: most under-reported crime in the nation.

So we are -- we have done some survey data, and that's where our first metric on our strategy comes in. Although nationally, the average is 18 percent propensity to report, when we did survey data we were at 33 percent. But that's certainly not where we want to be. We want our soldiers that are being affected by this crime to feel comfortable coming forward and reporting in the Army.

And so throughout our phases of our metrics and our strategy and campaign, we hold ourselves accountable on metrics of building up the propensity

to report and continuing to do survey work so we can see if we are actually bringing down the number of assaults with that. We hope to close that gap, to fully identify the assault, and then a propensity, and based on our survey data, so we can close that gap and get folks to come forward.

So we can -- you know, along with all of our prevention efforts, part of that prevention is the CID investigating and prosecution efforts we are doing with new initiatives to also hold individuals accountable, and that there be consequences for many of these assaults.

MR. MINITREZ: I've got about 2:00 on the clock right now, and Charlie, I know you've got to get going. But are there any final questions for our legal expert?

Q This is Terri with A Soldier's Mind. My biggest question is, how are we ensuring that the commanders are making sure these offenders are being held accountable?

MR. COSGROVE: Well, ma'am, that's an interesting question, and it's been asked before. First of all, I think it's important to keep in mind that every alleged offender is presumed innocent, all right? We certainly investigate the --

(Cross talk.)

MR. COSGROVE: We turn that investigation over to senior commanders, who have the advice of attorney. Each case must be determined on its own merit. Each case must be determined on its own merits. And we are not permitted by law to tell any commander -- excuse me, let me rephrase this. We're not permitted to --

(Cross talk.)

MS. KYZER: I think somebody needs to press their mute button.

MR. COSGROVE: We're not permitted by law, by the Uniform Code of Military Justice, to set a policy, for example, that every case must be sent to a court-martial, or every case must have some other type of disposition. Each case has to stand on its own merits. And we have the policies in place, I believe, that will address these issues.

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It's always juries, you know, or, in the military system, panels who will make the decision about guilt and innocence. But these are very difficult cases to present. And it does require a lot of training.

And so what is sort of a very hopeful sign to all of us, you know, who have been working in this field in the civilian sphere, for so many years, is to see the Army taking this on in this way. And there's a tremendous amount of training that's going on, within CID.

There's a lot of training now beginning. You just heard how the JAG Corps is initiating these with HQEs and the special victim prosecutors. And it will take time.

You know, this is -- it will take time to get the training down. It takes time to sort of get to the point where you'll see a higher rate of successful prosecution. But it's very encouraging to see the steps being taken.

Q I agree. I just -- I don't want you think I was implying that it's not being done at all, because that's not what I was trying to say. I was just wondering what kind of training you're doing, with those leaders, to ensure

they're more willing to go forward with holding their soldiers accountable, if they are perpetrators and the evidence is there.

MS. COLLINS: Yeah, and I think we could say that. I think it would be an excellent opportunity for Guy Surian to also speak about the investigative initiatives we've been doing and begun since we launched the first phase of the prevention strategy.

MR. SURIAN: Thanks.

Much like the prosecutors, we also have hired now seven highly qualified experts. We have them spaced around the command; one at headquarters, and the other is at our brigade headquarters, and two down at our laboratory, all of them with an idea of giving us an opportunity to glean insight and a different perspective, from a civilian perspective, best lessons learned, best practices, and improve our tactics and procedures that we have, to investigate, as well as how to do our stuff at the lab.

We look at these guys, our HQEs, as a force multiplier. They will help us do our jobs better. And in addition to that, we're on the brink of hiring 30 special victim -- special sexual assault investigators; probably place them about 22 places around the command or around the world at Army installations, generally speaking, those Army installations with a larger population that need that help.

Those guys will also be highly trained and highly specialized investigators that will also bring with them a wealth of knowledge and abilities to, again, further help all the agents in CID do a better job and a more efficient job of tackling these type of crimes here.

It -- we think it's a -- we think it's a prime opportunity to embrace the best practices both that we've already had in the military and that the civilian world is using, so that we can do a even better job in investigating and giving the prosecutors all the evidence they need to successfully prosecute these crimes.

MS. COLLINS: And I think if you want to mention -- you have a mobile training team currently out there training, don't you, Guy?

MR. SURIAN: That's also true. We have a training team from our United States Army Military Police School. It's got two highly qualified experts on it. And they also use the highly qualified experts from the regional commands that we have. They're going around almost to every post -- twice where we have CID agents at -- to train them in the newest and best techniques and to help facilitate a bit of a culture change within CID so that we look at these crimes just a little bit differently than we may have had in the past and that we don't judge too soon or jump to conclusions too soon.

Q Thank you very much.

MS. COLLINS: And I think that one of the other important aspects is, you know, we are working on increasing our capabilities down at our lab, at the criminal investigation laboratory that not only supports all the Army, but our laboratory supports all the other services as well. We've been working with a lot of efforts there. I don't know if you want to speak any more on that, Guy, on the --

MR. SURIAN: Well, the secretary of the Army's been nice enough to provide us with some extra funds in order to bolster our abilities down there. So we've hired some more examiners, not only in DNA but in some of the other related disciplines. We've got also some money to automate or to buy robotics in order to make the examinations and the -- and the analysis go even quicker than before -- all of this to try to get a faster turnaround on the evidence processing to help both the investigators and the commanders to take timely action.

MS. KYZER: And any other questions out there? Q I'm full of them.  
(Laughs.)

MS. KYZER: Go for it.

MR. SURIAN: Go ahead, CJ. Launch when ready.

Q Okay. I actually recently talked to one of those division sergeant majors who just returned from this conference.

And one of the things that he told me was that 50 percent of these offenses were actually same-sex offenses. Can you talk a little bit about that and how that's being addressed, especially, you know, in light of our current policies and the administration's desires to lift certain policies?

MS. COLLINS: I think he got -- may have had some misinterpretation of the data. We did say that, you know, certainly this is a crime that affects both female and male victims. And the Army certainly has experienced male -- you know, some of our victims are male victims as well. And last year's report, 12 percent of our victims were male. The number went down a little bit with this year's report. And most of those reports of male victims were offended by other male victims, but I don't think that is necessarily an untruth or any different than society.

And I think probably Dr. Lisak could talk a little bit about that, that certainly out there within the nation we have heterosexual male assaulting heterosexual males. That's not an uncommon phenomenon within our nation.

MR. LISAK: Yeah, in fact, the -- this is an area where, as you can imagine, the data is very thin, but the -- we do know that the rate of victimization of adult males is -- sexual victimization of adult males is certainly higher than official statistics reports will indicate, because all the -- for all the reasons that make reporting rates for female victims of this crime to be so low, I mean, you could magnify those factors when it comes to men.

But we do have, you know, some data that indicates pretty clearly that the majority of these male-on-male assaults are not being committed by men who have a homosexual orientation. These are by and large heterosexual-on-heterosexual assaults. And just as in prisons where, you know, if you -- the highest concentration of sexual assaults on men, of course, happens in our prisons, and that is almost across the board being perpetrated by heterosexual males.

I know it's a little paradoxical for some people at first to integrate that, but that's -- it's been very clearly the case.

Q Okay. Thank you, sir.

MR. LISAK: Sure. MS. KYZER: More questions, CJ?

Q No, I think most of -- I've got more questions. I think most of them were answered. If this was answered, just say so. You know, the Army hired 30 special investigators and 15 prosecutors across the Army at these installations where these occurrences are higher. Is there a concerted effort also to inform the force on both sides of the issue? You know, you must report it, but you also must ensure that you don't report something that didn't happen -- in other words, false accusation.

I think you covered that. I just want to make sure that as we're doing this training -- because I know I got the I. A.M. Strong pamphlets and cards I've passed out to my troops -- I just want -- but I didn't notice anything in there about consequences for false reports and any emphasis on that, to make sure that we're accurate.

MS. COLLINS: Yeah. I think CID could probably answer that best on the false reporting.

MR. GREY: Well, nationwide, the false reports of rape, for instance, are a very low percentage. We had -- just at this conference up here we had a detective sergeant from Austin, Texas, Police Department, and she advised us that in her city the number of false reports are like 6 percent, with 4 percent of those related to people with mental illnesses.

We would think that the number of false reports in the military is probably equally as small and probably doesn't need to be a major part of a campaign aimed at stamping out sexual assault.

Q Thank you.

MR. MINITREZ: Terri, anything?

Q No, I think I've got everything. Thank you.

MR. MINITREZ: Okay.

Jennifer, were you still on the line with us? Did you have anything?

Q I'm still here, but I really am just listening to what you guys are doing specific to Army, and I don't have any particular questions, but I appreciate hearing what you've said so far.

MR. MINITREZ: Okay. Fantastic.

Now, Terri and CJ, are -- well, CJ, you're obviously very familiar with the I. A.M. Strong program, but Terri, have you heard of this before?

Q Yeah, I'm very familiar with it as well.

MR. MINITREZ: Okay. We just want to make sure that the emphasis is out there on peer-to-peer intervention, bystander intervention; when you're in a situation where you see something happening that could lead to a potential sexual assault or sexual harassment situation, that you actually intervene on that soldier's behalf and potentially save them from that type of situation. That's -- in a nutshell, that's what we're trying to do.

Q Yes. And I've -- actually did several stories on the new campaign.

MR. MINITREZ: Fantastic. Well, we appreciate that. (It's all about ?) getting the word out.

Q If y'all could real quick, can you go over one more time the four phases, just what they are, not necessarily an in-depth discussion?

MR. : Sure.

MS. COLLINS: Sure. The first one is committed Army leadership, followed by Army-wide conviction. Third is achieve cultural change, and the fourth one is sustainment, refinement and sharing.

And we certainly would be happy to send out our strategy map to you, if that would give you a better idea.

But the overall campaign obviously is the I. A.M. Strong or Intervene-Act-Motivate others to do so campaign and again looking at, you know, making sure all our brothers and sisters, our band of brothers and sisters, are safe. And our soldiers' safety is paramount. And their well-being is paramount to the Army.

Q Thank you.

MR. MINITREZ: All right.

Well, I want to thank you guys for joining us today. And appreciate your efforts in spreading the word, in the very viral environment that the blogosphere is, because with soldier awareness comes an opportunity for soldiers to intervene and help us, in terms of spreading forth the prevention strategy.

So thank you again for joining us. And if there is anything that we can bring to you, via e-mail, just let Lindy or myself know. And we will get your questions answered and information to you.

MS. COLLINS: Oh, can I add just one more thing?

I want to say, one of our best partnerships we did start, this week, and actually we signed the paperwork last week, is a partnership with our BOSS program; Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers.

We had a number of BOSS soldiers here this week. And I will tell you, they are very excited about this partnership. You know, our trend data shows us that most of the assaults happen in the barracks, on the weekend, between young adults.

And so they're very excited about taking care of their fellow soldiers and being an intricate part of this program and being influencers within their community. And I think we're going to see great things, as we work with them, as we roll this out this year and they also work within their communities and become a strong voice in this area.

And that's all I have. Thank you very much.

MR. : Okay. MR. MINITREZ: All right.

Thank you all. Have a great and safe, happy Easter weekend.

END.